AKIRA

26™

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

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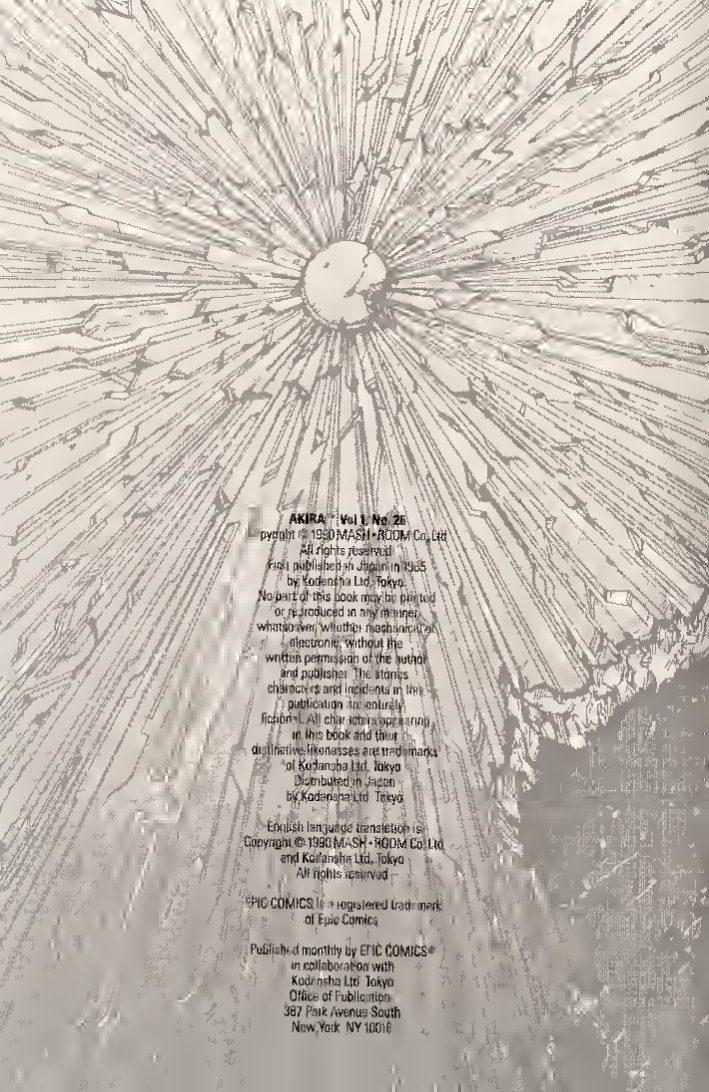

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AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 26

ASSASSINATION CORPS

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

2030. The world hovers on the brink of World War IV. **Kaneda**, leader of a band of teen-aged delinquents, brings his gang to a restricted area—the section of **Neo-Tokyo** known as the "old city", where thirty-eight years before, the first of the bombs fell.

As a result **Kaneda** and his friend **Tetsuo** become entangled in a power struggle between a mysterious military and scientific organization led by a man known only as the **Colonel** and an underground resistance group bent on putting a stop to the Colonel's activities. Members of the resistance include **Kay, Ryu,** and **Chiyoko**. Among their superiors is the blind **Lady Miyako**—a powerful religious leader with strong precognitive gifts.

The **Colonel** has a number of psychic children under his control. **Takashi, Masaru,** and **Kiyoko** are identified by numbers marked on their hands. **Lady Miyako** was at one time, **Number 19**. **Number 28** is Akira, so powerful that since the war he has been suspended in cryogenic sleep.

The Colonel's staff conducts experiments which awaken tremendous telepathic potential in **Tetsuo,** who is re-dubbed **Number 41.** Able to shrug off the most serious injuries, **Tetsuo** goes on a killing spree, even attacking **Kaneda**. **Tetsuo** seeks out **Akira,** whose powers he thinks may rival his own. In hibernation, Akira's power responds to Tetsuo's psychic energy. When **Tetsuo** reaches Akira's resting place, the cryogenic chamber cracks from within, and **Akira** emerges.

The **Colonel** summons the powerful SOL military satellite and orders that its laser cannon be fired at **Tetsuo** and **Akira**. **Akira** is saved by **Kaneda** and **Kay**, but the laser strikes Tetsuo's left arm. Afterward, **Neo-Tokyo** is placed in a state of military emergency. "Caretaker robots" patrol the streets and keep order.

Akira and the resistance fighters are cornered by the Colonel's troops, and **Takashi** takes a stray bullet through

Kai | The Colonel | Lt. Yamada | Kay

the skull.

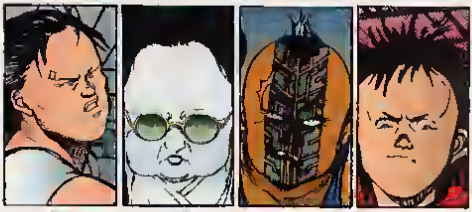
The trauma of Takashi's death galvanizes **Akira.** He unleashes a light blast powerful enough to devastate the entire city **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** sweep most of the people in the area upward **Kaneda** is last seen vanishing toward the sky. Afterward **Lady Miyako** opens her temple and offers shelter and comfort to those in need.

Neo-Tokyo is completely cut off from the outside world, and in the western part of the city the **Great Tokyo Empire** is formed—a monarchy with **Akira** on the throne and **Tetsuo** as his prime minister. Together the pair use their powers, healing the sick, wielding control of the faithful, and organizing their subjects into fighting units to defend their land. The **Empire** is eventually infiltrated by teams of spies from the outside world.

Masaru and **Kiyoko** are sick with withdrawal from the drug which augments and channels their mental powers. **Lady Miyako** asks that **Kay** bring the psychics to her.

Most of the spies from the outside are killed, but their leader **Lt. Yamada,** escapes when **Ryu** appears and leads him to the safety of an underground shelter. **Yamada** refuses to tell **Ryu** who has sent him or let **Ryu** join him.

Tetsuo forces an orgy of sex and drugs on several young girls. Only one—**Kaori**—survives. Afterward, **Tetsuo** looks into Akira's mind and emerges a terrified wretch. He consults **Lady Miyako**—whose mind he also briefly touched. She recounts to him the experiments decades earlier which created the numbered psychics and revealed that the Third World



Chiyoko | Lady Miyako | Joker | Tetsuo

War was begun by a mental blast from **Akira**. She also warns **Tetsuo** that he alone can control Akira's near inconceivable powers but he must first overcome his dependency on drugs. Disgusted and perplexed **Tetsuo** departs. On returning to his stronghold, he neglects his duties of state, concentrating instead on trying to kick the habit.

Kay and **Chiyoko** try to move **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** to Lady Miyako's temple. They are attacked by Tetsuo's followers, who escape with **Kiyoko**. **Chiyoko** rescues the girl, but is severely wounded. The two are brought to safety by the **Colonel**, who has been living in isolation. Before the **Colonel** departs in a caretaker robot with **Kiyoko, Chiyoko,** delirious, tells him to take the child to the temple. Meanwhile, **Kay** safely conveys **Masaru** to the temple.

Ryu and **Yamada** watch the **Empire** from hiding and are startled by an encounter with **Tetsuo,** whose withdrawal causes his power to surge erratically. **Ryu** is even more startled when **Tetsuo** blurts out what his telepathy has shown him—that **Yamada** has come to assassinate **Akira**.

Tetsuo's Lieutenant—acting without authorization—leads his army to Lady Miyako's temple, where they slaughter monks, penitents and helpless refugees. They are defeated by the power of Lady Miyako's psychically gifted monks and Kay's quick thinking. As the Empire's forces begin a new attack, **Tetsuo** returns to the shrine, maddened with the pain of withdrawal. The **Colonel,** who has been wounded by soldiers of the **Empire,** reaches the shrine at the same time and uses a remote control that enables him to fire a blast from the SOL satellite. As a result **Tetsuo** unleashes a wave of devastating psychic power, driving off his own army. During the mayhem this creates, **Kaneda** reappears, as if from nowhere.

Tetsuo takes another inner voyage, reliving both the happy and painful episodes from his past. He sees a vision of the double helix spiral that **Akira** constantly creates when he plays. Only **Kaori** is there to see **Tetsuo** return to the **Great Tokyo Empire** and bow down to his young lord.

Aboard an American Naval vessel, an international con-

Kaneda Kiyoko Tetsuos Aide Masaru

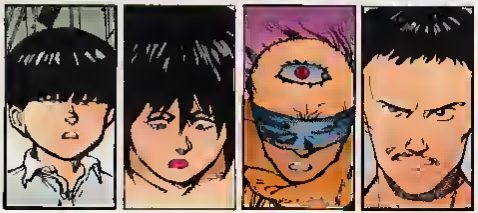
clave of scientists assembles. They pool their knowledge of **Akira** and code name him **Juvenile A.** Their data indicates that the effect of Akira's power is like that of the Big Bang—the force that created the universe—and that the most recent blast (Tetsuo's) lacked the scope and dimensions of the earlier ones. They also theorize a link between the psychic blasts and the firing of SOL, which is now once again under military control.

Kaneda complains to **Kai**—a member of Kaneda's old gang who's been helping **Kay** defend Lady Miyako's shrine—about his ragged clothing. **Kai** leads him to a black market shop in the local thieves' quarter.

Leading the thieves is **Joker,** the former leader of the Clown motorcycle gang who were Kaneda's most bitter enemies. However, **Kaneda, Kai,** and **Joker** agree to work together to avenge Tetsuo's crimes.

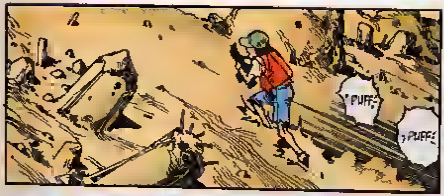
The **Colonel**, too, is after **Tetsuo**, blaming himself for the destruction **Tetsuo** has created. **Kay** badgers the **Colonel,** hoping to make him reveal Chiyoko's whereabouts. Instead, the **Colonel** convinces **Kay** to join him, and the pair leave the shrine together. **Lady Miyako** is irate when she learns of this and sends for **Kaneda**. She implores him to return with her "beloved daughter." **Kaneda** and **Kai** agree "borrowing" a prized pair of motorcycles from **Joker** to speed their search, and **Kaneda** confesses that he has been hearing Kay's voice, telling him where she's gone, perhaps through psychic means. The pair take to the subways. They confront an eerie spectral vision of **Kay,** similar to a vision **Kay** once saw of **Kaneda.**

Kay and the **Colonel**—still weak from his injuries—are harried by a giant psychic and soldiers for the **Great Tokyo Empire,** but they safely reach the Colonel's headquarters ahead of their enemies. There, the doctor and **Chiyoko,** who is still unconscious, are being guarded by a caretaker robot. When the enemy arrives, **Kay** and the **Colonel** use subterfuge to mislead and harass them, and in the midst of the battle, **Kay** realizes that she can use the caretaker to carry **Chiyoko** to safety. Meanwhile, the giant psychic finds **Chiyoko,** and the **Colonel** finds himself out of bullets.



Akira Kaori Seer Ryu

BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
NOW!!
BLAM
HMM.
BUDDA
BUDDA
RUN!!
BLAM
BLAM

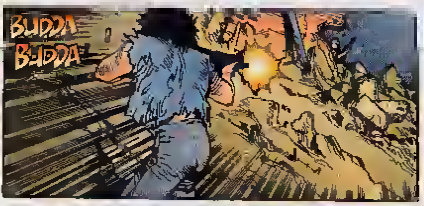

PUFF!
PUFF!

AARGH!

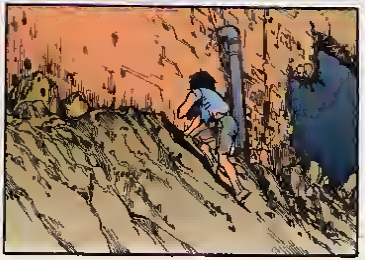
BLAM

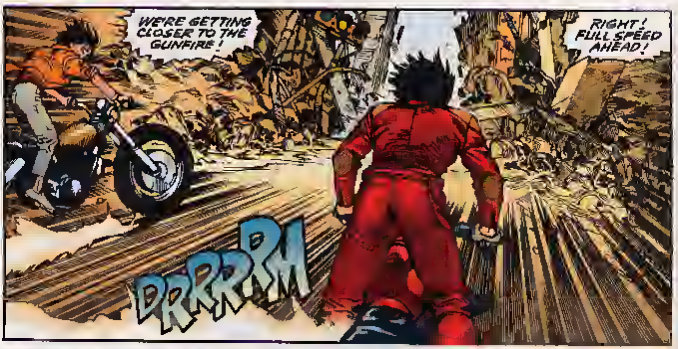
BLAM
POW
TOK

EH..?!

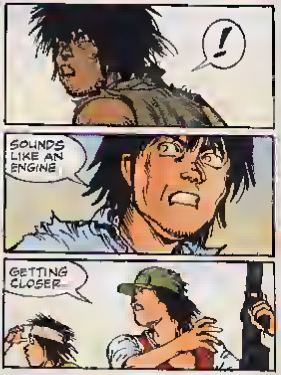

BUDDA
BUDDA

I'M OUT OF AMMUNITION!




WE'RE GETTING CLOSER TO THE GUNFIRE!
RIGHT! FULL SPEED AHEAD!
DRRRRM

RRRMM


!
SOUNDS LIKE AN ENGINE
GETTING CLOSER

OVER THERE!

IT'S SIMPLE ENOUGH TO REWIRE
TWO CIRCUITS HAVE TO BE CUT AND THE AUTO-NAVIGATION SYSTEM CAN BE USED
HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE?
FIVE HOURS... PERHAPS TEN...
GOOD. START ON IT RIGHT AWAY
EH-?!
WAIT!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'LL TAKE CARE OF CHIYOKO...
I NEVER SAID I HAD THE TIME TO-!

CHIYOKO
tap
TOK

AAH!
SHHP
BAM
OOOUH!
THAK
HAH!
THUK

BAM
POW
SHIT!!!
HEY!
I'M STILL TALKING TO--!
RUN!!
I'LL EXPLAIN WHY LATER! HURRY!
WHAT'S THIS RUSH?
GASP!
?

SHOOM
POW
AAUGH!
OOHUU!
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO MY COMPUTER!
COME ON!
BUDDABUDDA

WHATSA-MATTER, OUT OF AMMO?
derrn
derrn
Z!
NOW WHAT?
DRRRRRN
WHA--
WHA--
DRRRN
YAAAH!

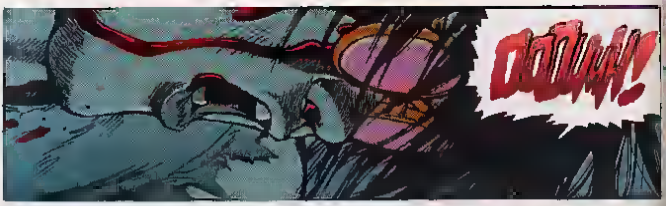
SHIT!
SKREEE
POW
.....
OW! OW! OW! OW!
LOOKS LIKE AN ENEMY OF THE EMPIRE!
KNK KNK KLK
DIE!
drrrn
DR RN

KANEDAAA!
BUDDA
BUDDA
WA-UH--!
ZING
TZING
POW
CHEW ON THIS!!
RRRN
SPLAT
KANEDA! ARE YOU OKAY?
I'G ONE MOTHER OF A BUMP ON MY HEAD.

WHAT BRINGS THE AIR OF YOU HERE?
...OOG...
LOOKY WE FOUND THE SKIN-HEAD.
KAY...
BAM
MOANS WHIMPERS

POP
BASH
HMM?!
WHAT'S THAT?!
AH--!
WHUD

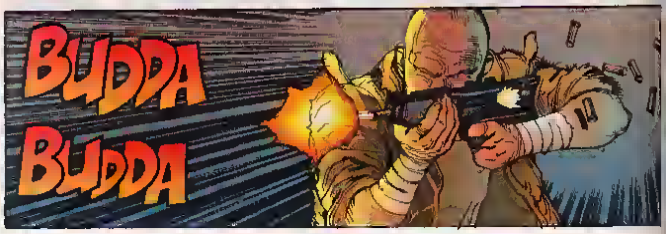
OH!
SMAK
YEEEK!
kuk
!


AUUGH!

!
JulieDUB

OOH!
shf

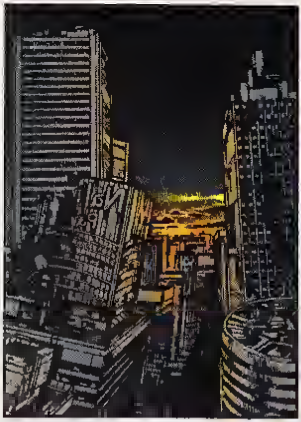
HUNH?

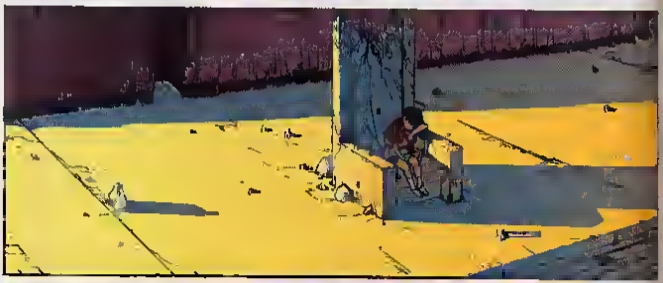

BUDDA
BUDDA

GUKK
KAY!
LOOKS LIKE SHE'S DOWN!
KAY!
SPEAK TO ME!

THAT BASTARD HURT HER!
UH-OH!
...OOH...
EHH...?
THUD

GLASSES
WHERE ARE MY
GLASSES?
A...AAH...
HEYY!





TAK TAK
TAK

WHAT?
IS THAT TRUE?
WHERE DID YOU HEAR IT?
ONE OF THE OFFICERS WAS DISCUSSING IT IN THE MESS. I DIDN'T GET ANY DETAILS, BUT THEY'RE SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE TONIGHT.
WHY WEREN'T WE NOTIFIED OF THIS?
TONIGHT ...ON THIS SHIP?
I'VE HEARD OF THE CORPS, OF COURSE, BUT...
...THE AKIRA ASSASSINATION CORPS.
I SUPPOSE, GIVEN RECENT EVENTS, IT WAS INEVITABLE...
...THAT THEY SUMMON...

PART OF THE SPECIAL FORCES, AREN'T THEY?
AND THEY ARE DUE TO ARRIVE HERE TONIGHT...
BUT WHETHER OR NOT THEIR TARGET IS AKIRA...
...HAS YET TO BE CONFIRMED...
...MUCH WILL DEPEND...
...ON THE DISCUSSIONS FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF YOUR REPORT.
ALL OF THE WORLD LEADERS MUST BE CONSULTED— AND REACH A CONSENSUS WHICH WILL BE ACTED UPON AT ONCE.
ALL FORCES MUST BE PUT IN PLACE NOW READY TO IMPLEMENT THEIR DECISION.
HOW MUCH WEIGHT WILL OUR RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVE?
YOU HAVE MY ASSURANCE YOUR INPUT WILL BE GIVEN MAXIMUM CONSIDERATION.

BUT ADMIRAL, THEY MUST REALIZE...
THAT SENDING ARMED MEN AGAINST AKIRA WOULD BE FUTILE...
COME NOW! THESE ARE THE VERY FINEST FIGHTING MEN.
A SENSELESS WASTE OF HUMAN LIVES!
AND THEY'RE FILLED WITH PATRIOTIC FERVOR!

TAP
!
WHO GOES THERE?!
HOLD YOUR FIRE! IT'S ME —KAI!!

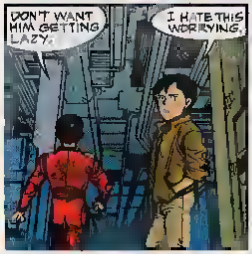
OH,
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HUNH?
SEE FOR YOURSELF
KANEDA TOLD ME TO CHECK ON... UM...
HOW DO THINGS LOOK?
THEY'RE ALL PUMPED UP.
OH
KAHAHA!
YAHAHA!
ALL IN TUNE...
EH...?
IT'S THOSE PILLS...
THEY CAN GET HIGH ON JUST A FEW GRAINS...
bang
SUMMER'S GONNA DIE!
LEARN STRAIGHT!
THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF STINKING JUNKIES. THEY STAY WITH TETSUO FOR THE DRUGS...
THE DRUGS YOU MADE!

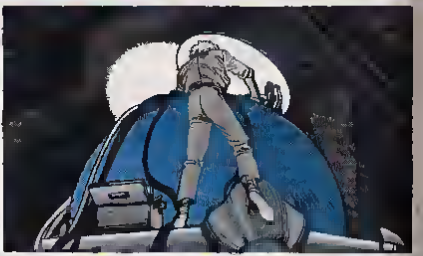
!
HEY KANEDA
TOK
KAI! WHERE'D YOU GET TO?
OH. THERE YOU ARE

HOW'S IT LOOK?
THEY'RE SETTLED IN FOR THE NIGHT.

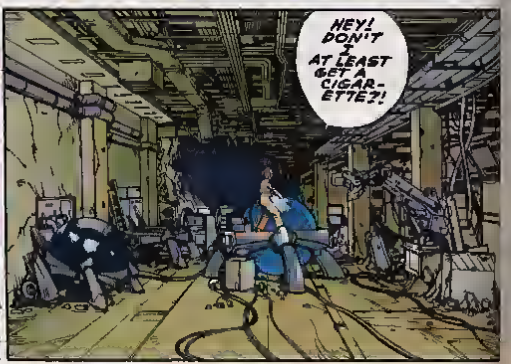
I HOPE SHE'LL BE OKAY.
ANYWAY, LET'S GO CHECK UP ON THAT DOCTOR

HOW'S KAY?
NO CHANGE.

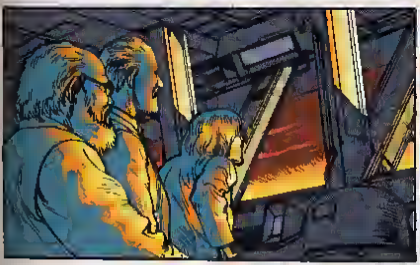

DON'T WANT HIM GETTING LAZY.
I HATE THIS WORRYING.

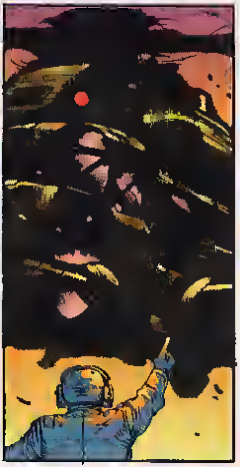


DO THIS! MAKE THAT - IT'S NOT FAIR!


HEY! DON'T I AT LEAST GET A CIGAR-ETTE?!

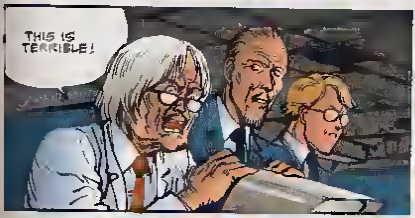
BUDDABUDDABR



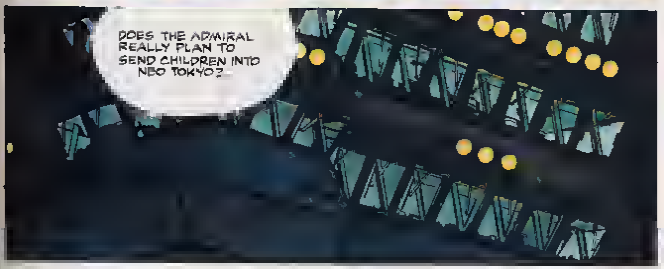


HERE THEY COME

FALL IN!
ATTENTION!


THIS IS TERRIBLE!

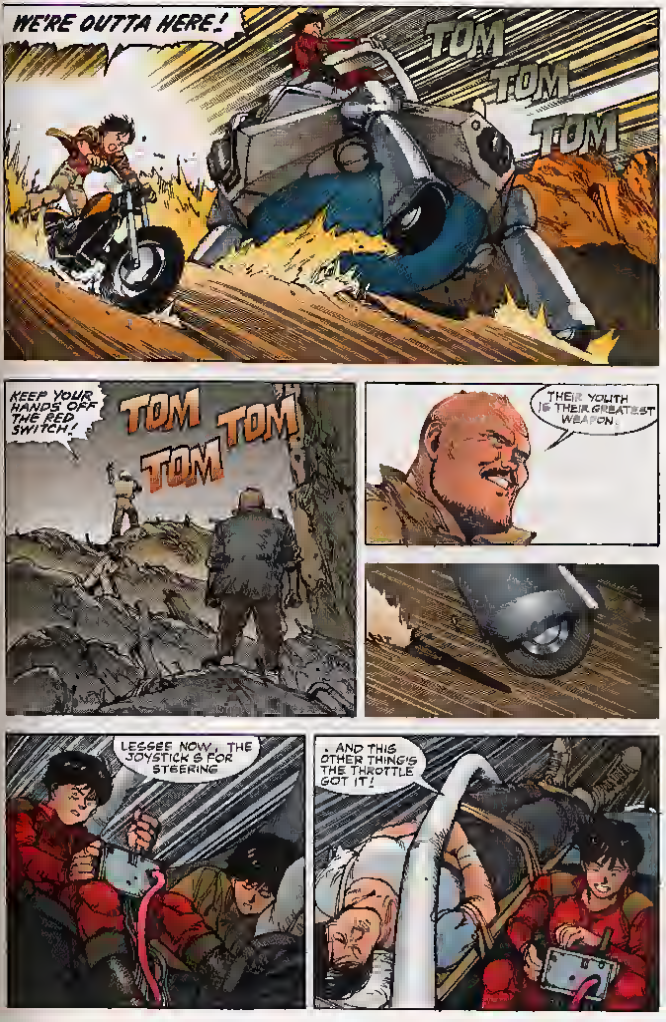
LOOK AT HOW YOUNG THEY ARE! A CORPS OF CHILDREN!
CHILDREN?

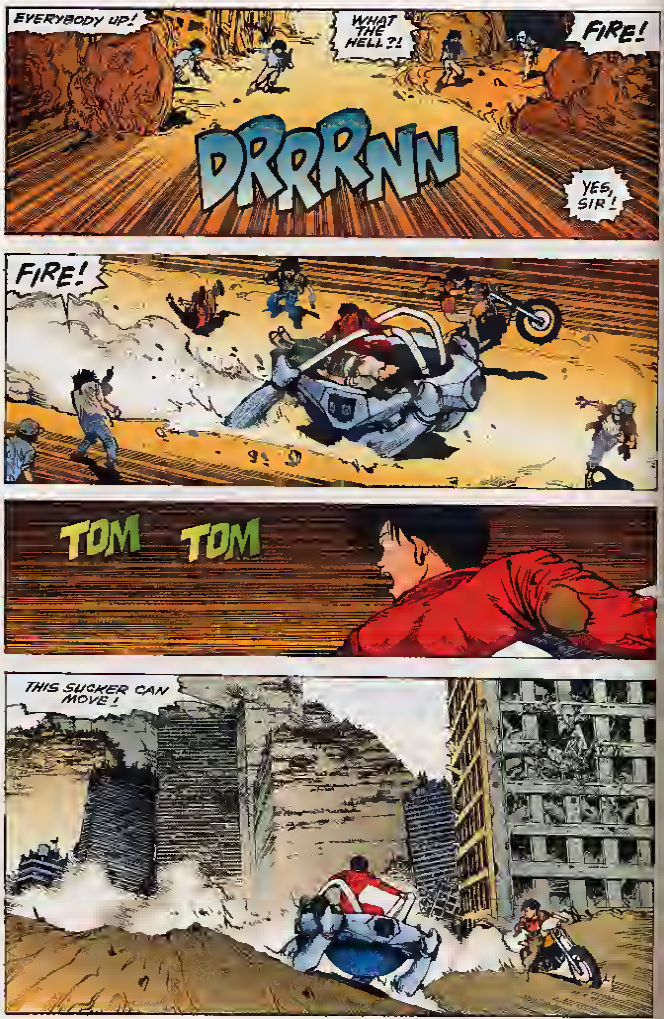

DOES THE ADMIRAL REALLY PLAN TO SEND CHILDREN INTO NEO TOKYO?

CRAP! IT'S ALREADY PAST DAWN
HEY, BALDY, HOW COME YOU'RE STAYING BEHIND?
I HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF!
HUH
IF YOU MEAN TETSUO, YOU'RE IN NO SHAPE TO FIGHT HIM NOW

HERE ..?
YES, THE RIGHT SIDE IS HOT, SO BE CAREFUL SHE DOESN'T TOUCH IT
TELL ME HOW TO RUN IT!
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO
THIS IS THE CONTROL BOX
HOW'S IT WORK?
THIS IS THE JOYSTICK - USE IT TO SET YOUR DIRECTION - AND THAT DIAL'S THE THROTTLE
WHAT'S THIS OTHER THING? THE AUTO-BALANCE?
NO, IT'S NOT! KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THAT!

HEY, KANEDAAA!
DRRRN
DID YOU REPAIR THE BIKE?
KRR
RRR
COULDN'T GET THE FRONT FORK COMPLETELY STRAIGHT, BUT I RIDE WELL ENOUGH TO COMPENSATE.
RIGHT!
LET'S GO.
HERE YOU'LL NEED THIS.
THANKS.
REMEMBER, COLONEL—
I'LL BE THE ONE TO FINISH TETSUO!
DRR
RN


WE'RE OUTTA HERE!
TOM
TOM
TOM
KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THE RED SWITCH.
TOM
TOM
TOM
THEIR YOUTH IS THEIR GREATEST WEAPON.
LESSEE NOW. THE JOYSTICK'S FOR STEERING
. AND THIS OTHER THING'S THE THROTTLE GOT IT!


EVERYBODY UP!
WHAT THE HELL?!
FIRE!
DRRRNN
YES, SIR!
FIRE!
TOM TOM
THIS SUCKER CAN MOVE!

DON
KLANG
DON
KLANG
KLANG
KEDING
KEDING
KEDING
BOOMALAKA
BOOMALAKA
BOOMALAKA
BOOMALAKA
GLOOP
KEDING
KEDING
THIS BREAKFAST HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE BLESSINGS OF LORD AKIRA!
EAT IT WITH GRATITUDE!

LINE UP! LINE UP! FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED!
SLOP
WHERE IS EVERYBODY?
FEWER OF THE FAITHFUL SHOW UP EVERY DAY, SIR.
CHILDREN EAT FIRST! ALL KIDS COME TO THE HEAD OF THE LINE!
LATELY, WE'VE EVEN HAD LEFTOVERS
.....

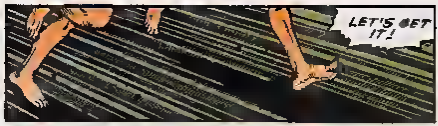
THAT MAN...
GO GET HIM.
YES, SIR!
HUNH?
HEY, YOU-!
AAGH!
RIP
EEK!
BAM
WHY D YOU RUN AWAY?

LOOK! HE'S GOT BREAD!
NOT ONE OF OUR LOAVES!
LET ME SEE
DID YOU GET THIS FROM MIYAKO?
WELL?! DID YOU?!
Y-Y-YES...
LADY MIYAKO'S FOLLOWERS SAY THERE ARE DANGEROUS DRUGS IN YOUR FOOD.
MEDDLESOME OLD BAG...
FLUD
PLUF

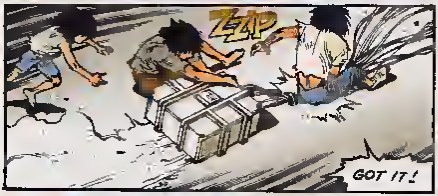
HMM?
buddabuddabuddabuddda
A HELICOPTER!
FWOOSH
SHOOM

O-OHHH!
THE INVADERS RECEIVE GUIDANCE FROM SOMEONE IN OUR L_ND!
THERE IS A SPY AMONG US!
HURRY!
WE CAN'T LET RELIEF SUPPLIES REACH MIYAKO!
BUDDA BUDDA
HWUP

OH--
-- CRAP!!
DAMN!!!
TOKKA
TOKKA
SKUFF

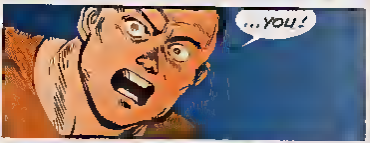

LET'S GET IT!

NOT VERY BIG FOR A FOOD PACK.
OPEN IT AND SEE!


ZZAP
GOT IT!

STAY BACK! DON'T TRY TO OPEN IT!

MORE THAN STANDARD SUPPLIES, HUNH?


...YOU!

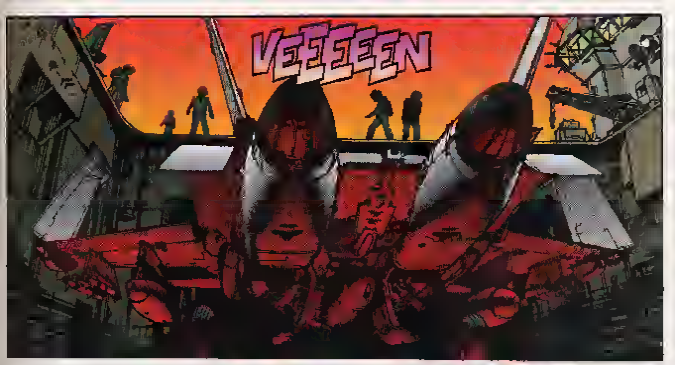
TAK

IT'S RIGGED TO EXPLODE IF YOU FORCE IT

YOU KIDS HEARD THE MAN. NO FOOD
NOW BEAT IT.

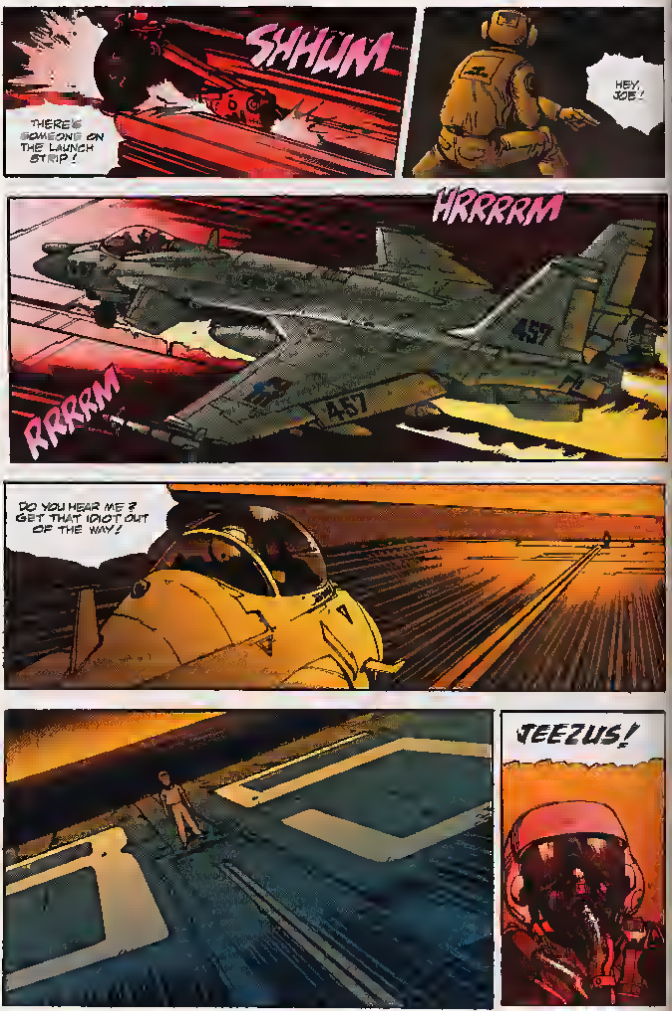
FWUP
EXCELLENT!
LET'S DO IT AGAIN!
DON'T I GET TO SEE WHAT SANTA BROUGHT YOU?
SO FAR, YOU'VE STAYED ALIVE BY LUCK. CLEAR OFF NOW, BEFORE IT RUNS OUT.
DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE.
I NEVER SAID I WANTED TO LIVE FOREVER.
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA

buddabuddabudda
HMM...
MASTER TETSUO...
NOW WHERE...?
HE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO...

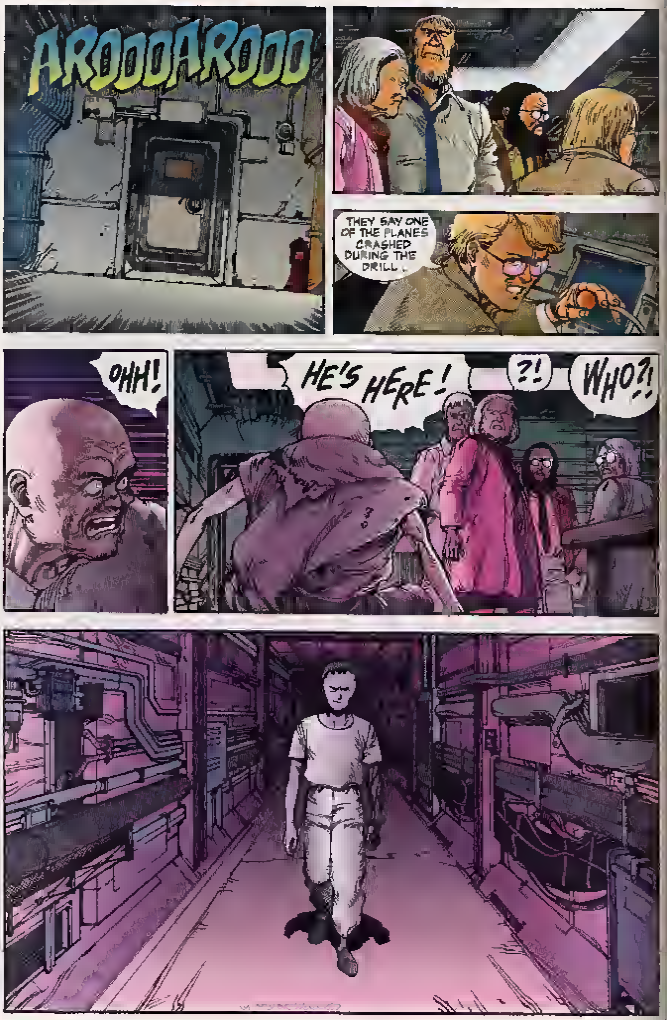

VEEEEEN

RUN! IF YOU'RE NOT AIRBORNE IN FIVE MINUTES, YOU'RE A SITTING DUCK!
TAK
TAK
TAK

DELTA TANGO 4-57 CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF!
JOE, DO YOU COPY?


SHHUM
THERE'S SOMEONE ON THE LAUNCH STRIP!
HEY, JOE!
HRRRRM
RRRRM
457
DO YOU HEAR ME? GET THAT IDIOT OUT OF THE WAY!
JEEZUS!

FWOOM
DAMAGE CONTROL! CONDITION RED!
WE NEED YOU ON THE FORWARD FLIGHT DECK, NOW! THERE'S A FIRE THERE!

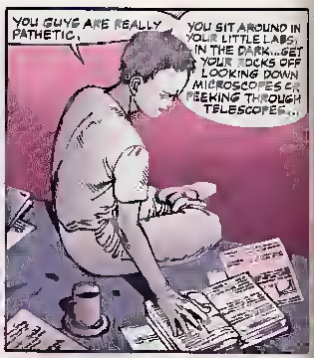

ARDDDARDDD
THEY SAY ONE OF THE PLANES CRASHED DURING THE DRILL.
OHH!
HE'S HERE!
?!
WHO?!

HHRRRM...
G-GURK
WHO--OR WHAT - IS COMING, KARMA TANG!
?
HUNH?!
OH!
THE LIGHTS--!
GURK

PAH
GASP!
EH?
WH- WHO ARE YOU?!
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?!
...MMM...
NUMBER 41...
I THOUGHT I'D DROP IN ON YOUR MEETING AND GIVE MY FAN CLUB A THRILL...

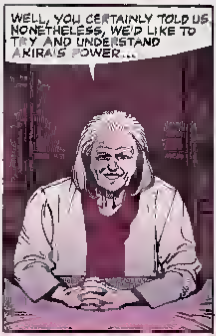
..HUH...
THAT'S A GRAPH OF THE THIRD PHENOMENON...
...WHICH WAS OF SMALLER MAGNITUDE THAN THE SECOND
DO YOU THINK AKIRA CAUSED IT?
OR SOMEONE ELSE? YOU, PERHAPS?
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO LEARN STUDYING AKIRA?
HE'S USING TELEPATHY!
WHAT DOES AKIRA MEAN TO YOU SCIENTISTS? A RESOURCE FOR PEACE? MAYBE USE HIS POWERS TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY? OR IS HE JUST A WEAPON, LIKE ANY OTHER BOMB OR MISSILE?

.....


YOU GUYS ARE REALLY PATHETIC.
YOU SIT AROUND IN YOUR LITTLE LABS, IN THE DARK...GET YOUR JOCKS OFF LOOKING DOWN MICROSCOPES OR PEEKING THROUGH TELESCOPES...

HE'S A PROBLEM WE FEEL WE MUST UNDERSTAND, SO MUCH POWER BEYOND ANYONE'S CONTROL!

YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE TRUTH THROUGH LENSES THAT DISTORT EVERYTHING!

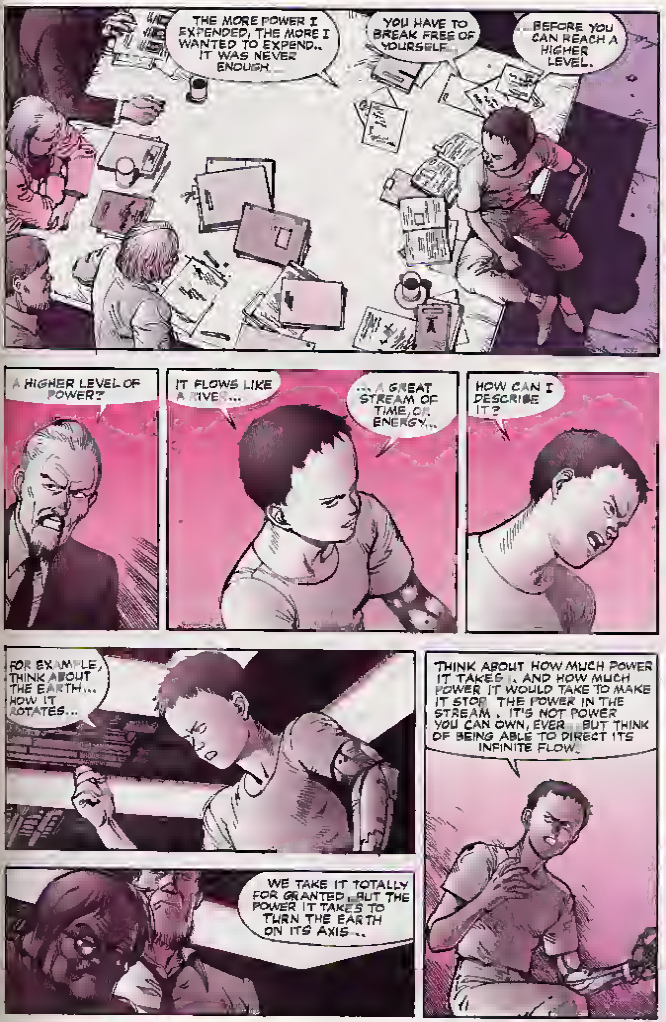

WELL, YOU CERTAINLY TOLD US. NONETHELESS, WE'D LIKE TO TRY AND UNDERSTAND AKIRA'S POWER...

...WITH OR WITHOUT THE AID OF OUR TOOLS.

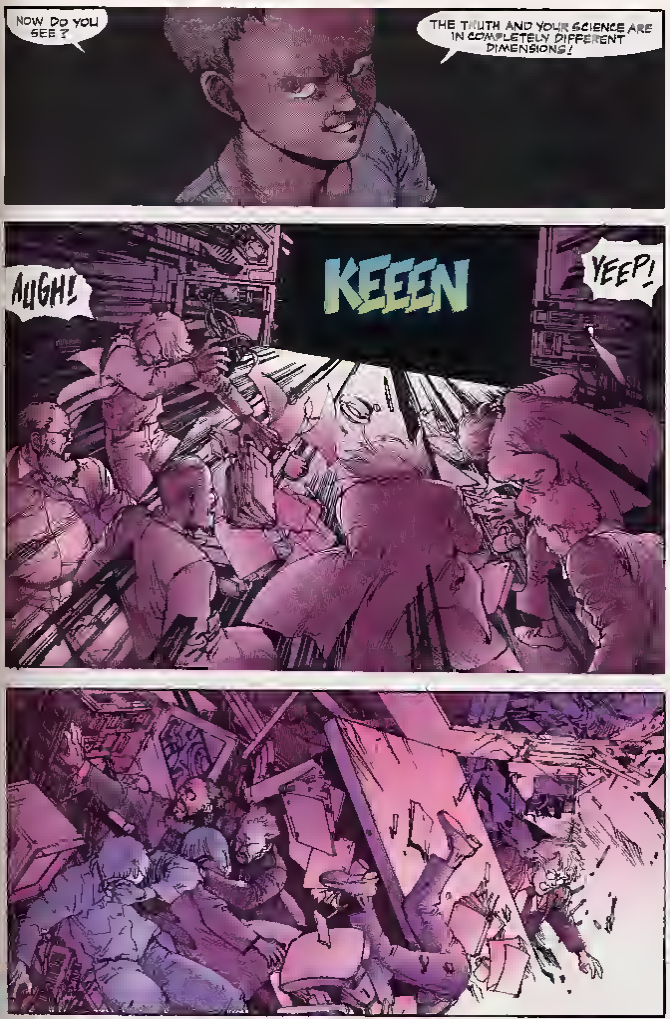
POWER, HUNH?

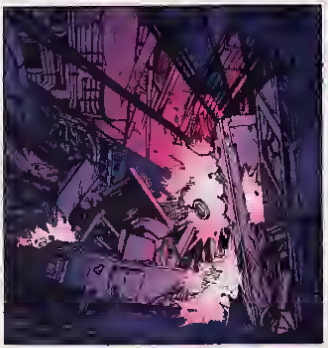
THAT'S HOW I THOUGHT ABOUT AKIRA, TOO IN THE BEGINNING.

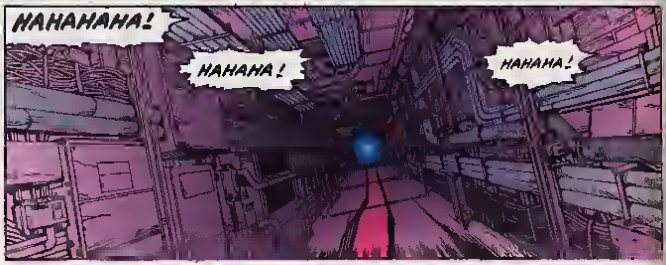
IT'S AN EASY MISTAKE TO MAKE, WHEN YOU'RE TRYING TO IMPRESS EVERYONE BY THROWING YOUR WEIGHT AROUND

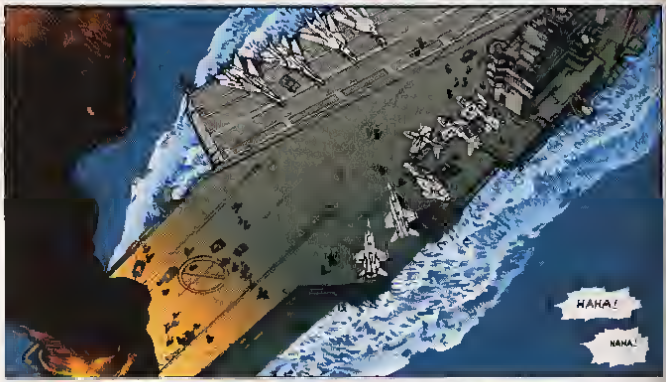

THE MORE POWER I EXPENDED, THE MORE I WANTED TO EXPEND.. IT WAS NEVER ENOUGH...
YOU HAVE TO BREAK FREE OF YOURSELF...
...BEFORE YOU CAN REACH A HIGHER LEVEL.
A HIGHER LEVEL OF POWER?
IT FLOWS LIKE A RIVER...
...A GREAT STREAM OF TIME OR ENERGY...
HOW CAN I DESCRIBE IT?
FOR EXAMPLE, THINK ABOUT THE EARTH... HOW IT ROTATES...
THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH POWER IT TAKES... AND HOW MUCH POWER IT WOULD TAKE TO MAKE IT STOP. THE POWER IN THE STREAM... IT'S NOT POWER YOU CAN OWN, EVER... BUT THINK OF BEING ABLE TO DIRECT ITS INFINITE FLOW.
WE TAKE IT TOTALLY FOR GRANTED, BUT THE POWER IT TAKES TO TURN THE EARTH ON ITS AXIS...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN DIRECT...
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD
SO I'LL SHOW YOU
OOOGH!
OH! OH! OH! OH!
KARMA TANGI!
LOOK!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!


NOW DO YOU SEE?
THE TRUTH AND YOUR SCIENCE ARE IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS!
AUGH!
KEEEN
YEEP!







NEXT ISSUE: **THE GRAND CONVOCATION!**

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The Empero
and under the impact
planning their secre
Colonel fighting a
board deadly warships
dirty work. Yes, Akir
he has set in motion.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA